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Soviet defector

KGB officer proves major catch for West

In June, the Soviet Embassy in Tehran made an ominous discovery; the car assigned to Vice-Consul Vladimir Andreyevich Kuzichkin, 32, was found abandoned on a side street. Of Kuzichkin there was no sign, nor did quiet but urgent investigations turn up any trace of him.

The Soviet installations abroad have good reason to fear such disappearances. Despite continual checks, the use of family hostages back in the Soviet Union (in Kuzichkin's case a wife), and the immediate recall of officials suspected of succumbing to the attractions of life in the West, there is a continual trickle of defectors. Each such case is a propaganda blow to the Soviet Union's would-be image of a social Eden populated by proud and loyal citizens; intellectuals and ballet dancers are bad enough, but Soviet officials take with them potential diplomatic dynamite.

Kuzichkin, a well-educated, polished and intelligent official who had received two spot promotions, would be an especially severe blow, and the Soviets had even greater reason to fear his defection than the anticipated blast from a bitterly disillusioned official who had been the beneficiary of the best that Soviet society had to offer. For despite his apparently low rank in the embassy, Kuzichkin was a KGB officer — with a remarkable background. He had served in the Center in Moscow, in the Special ("S") Directorate of the 1st Chief Directorate of the KGB — the unit which procures, trains and dispatches Soviet Illegals emplaced throughout the Free World, and he had spent five years in the KGB *Rezidentura* in Tehran as the Illegals Support officer, collecting the documentation that would be used by the Special Directorate to fabricate the legends of Illegals destined for other countries, and supporting the communications links of Illegals emplaced in Iran and elsewhere. In addition, of course, he was also privy to all Soviet activities in Iran, and knowledgeable about Soviet activities in Afghanistan as well.



Donald Morris

Among the score and more of major KGB defectors in recent decades, not one had ever served in the Special Directorate, or as an Illegals Support officer abroad — and the Soviets' worst fears were confirmed when Kuzichkin surfaced in England in October, in the hands of Britain's Secret Intelligence Service. He had been granted permission to reside in the U.K., but had not as yet been given "political asylum" (which he may not have requested). Of his movements between his disappearance in Tehran and his reappearance in England there were no details — nor are any liable to be disclosed. It can be assumed, however, that he was in touch with the SIS from the outset — and possibly even before, as a "defector in place" — and that he brought documents with him.

British sources informed me that Kuzichkin has been fully cooperative, and that complete reports of his debriefing have been passed to the CIA, which is delighted. British practice is to settle such defectors on the economy as soon as practicable; Kuzichkin has every intention of writing articles and unquestionably a book based on his knowledge, and the story of Soviet machinations in Iran and Afghanistan from an impeccable source should be in the public domain in due course.

It is, however, Kuzichkin's credentials in the Soviet Illegals program which strikes terror into the KGB. The Illegals Apparatus is to-

tally distinct from the Legal Apparatus — in which case officers, under official cover in their true (hence "legal") identities, recruit and run agents. Soviet Illegals are citizens of the Soviet Union, commissioned officers of the KGB (or the GRU), emplaced under false identities in the West. They are case officers who handle agents recruited by the Legal Apparatus and turned over to them; since they have no overt contact with the local *Rezidentura* based in the embassy, they are extremely difficult to locate. They are generally documented as resident aliens (who may be naturalized in time), claiming origin in yet another nation. They need know little about the country they come to — only something of the country they claim as their birthplace — so there is no need of the mythical Midtown, U.S.A., beloved of novelists, located in Siberia where KGB officers are taught to pass themselves off as native Americans.

Soviet Illegals are used for the most important agents: thanks to their cover they can survive a break in diplomatic relations, when the Soviets, including the Legal *Rezidentura*, may have to decamp.

Kuzichkin unquestionably can identify many of the Illegals emplaced in Iran (who may include ethnic members of any Mideast group, drawn from the Soviet Central Asian Republics), as well as Illegals emplaced elsewhere, in whose communications links he may have figured. And, thanks to his service in the Special Directorate, he will be able to identify many Illegals throughout the world, on whose legends he once worked.

No such blow has ever before been suffered by the Illegals Apparatus; Kuzichkin beyond any doubt ranks as one of the major intelligence defectors of all time. Few Soviet Illegals anywhere, active during Kuzichkin's years in the Illegals program, will be able to rest easy.

*Morris spent 17 years as a CIA official, engaged in Soviet counterespionage operations, before retiring in 1972.